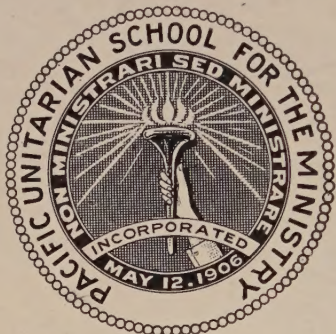


The Moral Evolution

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WILLIAM CHANNING GANNETT

OF ROCHESTER, N. Y.

THE MORAL EVOLUTION

LENTEN SERMONS

ON

SIN AND ITS REMEDY

BY

JUDSON TITSWORTH

MINISTER OF
PLYMOUTH CHURCH

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Genesis 3:17—"And the Eyes of Them Both Were
Opened."

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE ORIGINAL SIN.

THE WORDS "original sin" have been mainly used in religious language to name a fact or condition in humanity, the necessary inheritance by their descendants of the guilt of the original pair of sinners. Such use of the words, however, is possible only on the ancient but abandoned theory that all generations of their children were in a real sense present in the original pair when they sinned, and so participated in their sin. There is only one strictly proper use of the words and that is to make them mean the actual first sin, the sin of the original sinners. It is in this sense that the original sin will be considered in this study of the subject.

The original sin, like most matters of religious interest, has been brought out into the light of scientific knowledge in recent years and looks a different thing in some important respects, in that light. Biology has affected the biblical story

of Adam, his creation and fall, much as astronomy has affected the ancient theory of a celestial heaven or geology the notion of a subterranean hell. Geology too has assisted in the modification of our thought about the original sin by compelling us to think of the history of the earth in terms of tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of years. We look for the scene of Adam's creation and fall at a spot traditionally indicated to be located six thousand years ago and the territory of time thereabouts is as clear of it as the skies are proven by astronomy to be clear of a physical heaven or the interior of the earth, by geology, of a physical hell.

What then has become of the original sin? If the story of Adam, his creation and fall, is unhistorical, a myth or an allegory rather than a history of actual events, was there no original sin to which men may trace their moral history? Is it all a falsehood? Intelligent religious faith has learned in many particulars the vital necessity of discriminating between form and reality in its thought about verities. It is because it has learned to do this that it has utterly abandoned its old ideas of a physical heaven and a

physical hell without giving up any degree of its confidence in the spiritual reality of these things. So it may distinguish between the form and the reality of its idea of the original sin. The story of man's creation and fall may be, as science declares, untrue in form, and still be entirely true in its moral reality. The ancient poet-author of the story may have had no data for the accurate reporting of the events of the distant and dim past of which he was writing, but if he had moral insight he was competent to write of the original sin in a way true to the essential moral nature of man.

The world is full of writings which are fiction as to their form while they are truth as to their contents. Fiction is not necessarily untruth. While imaginative in form it may be profoundly true in fact. Who cares for the objection that *Romola* is fiction so long as George Eliot in that wonderful novel analyzes so powerfully and accurately the evolution of a soul, whose ideal is self gratification, into the character and life to which such a soul irresistibly tends? The world's great seers have always been poets, men of imagination, fiction makers. Moral insight has often its best instrument in fiction. Jesus was the

greatest novelist in literature. He used fiction rather than historical narrative, habitually, for his purpose of teaching. His novels were very short stories, we call them parables, but his moral insight instinctively chose this form of fictitious story as better vehicle for his truth than tales true in form or didactic lessons.

Tennyson suggests this superiority of fiction as a vehicle for truth in these lines from *In Memoriam*:

For wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

Let it be freely conceded therefore by the student of religious truth that it does not in the least degree, necessarily, detract from the moral value of this story of the creation and fall of man if science demonstrates beyond a question that it is unhistorical. Its moral value no more depends upon its being true historically than the parable of the Prodigal Son. If the author of the story, whoever he may have been, had moral insight enough to give the correct analysis of the original sin, even although he had strictly speaking no scientific knowledge of the times of which

he was writing, he was competent to write truthfully. For the story he may have used his imagination; the essential thing was the apprehension of the nature of the original sin not its manner. Moral insight could discover the nature of sin, what it must have consisted in, but only historical knowledge could guarantee him accuracy in depicting the circumstances. So he might be right in the essentials and be wrong in the form of the story in which he sought to save the essential truth.

It is not difficult to separate these two things in the story of the original sin. The writer had these certainties to start with: that man did some time begin to be and did some time begin to sin. We know now that man's real origin was much earlier than this writer supposed. But we do not change the fact that man began to be by pushing back his beginning into the darkness before historic knowledge lights our way. The fact that he began to be is the common basis of the beliefs of all ages, including our own, and will abide as an impregnable refuge for the understanding through all the shifting of men's minds from one theory to another in the progress towards knowledge of how and when he began

to be. The writer of the story of creation had a far more important thing to say than that man was created thus and then, it was that he was created and that God was his Creator. These are truths of the first order. When and how God created man we can afford to wait any amount of time to discover. And if meanwhile the author of the story in Genesis has given us an imaginative rather than a historical account it does not in the least detract from the moral value of the story, if it appear that the story is true to the moral instincts of man.

So the writer of the story knew that man began to sin, that sin began to be. He knew that sin was not eternal: was not in the divine order, was disorder, a cross current in the divine stream of purpose. This is a truth of the first order, but when and how this obstruction to the divine order appeared, what circumstances marked its appearance, he did not need to know. Moral insight was essential, historical knowledge was not. The essential truth that sin did sometime begin to be, and when it began was disobedience to God—this was the fruit of the writer's accurate moral insight. But the setting of this truth in a fanciful story about a tree with moral qualities

in its fruit and about a snake with the power of human speech and more than human subtlety, was the fruit of his imagination, whose only use was to carry the truth and keep it within the reach of men's attention; so that it might "enter in at lowly doors."

The fundamental fact that man was created has compelled thoughtful men in all ages to try to find out how he was created, with the result of a great variety of stories of creation. The forms of these stories have been determined by the practical character and the state of the intelligence of the people believing them. The story of creation has had a new form suggested for it in our age. It is still too early to adopt any form as necessarily final. It remains a matter of historical rather than of moral significance what the true form may be. God remains the Creator however or whenever the creating may have been done or may be still doing. Even supposing the extreme conjecture of spontaneous generation to be possible, there is no inconsistency in that with the presence of divine force in the very spontaneity. Spontaneity is not force; it is only a method of force. There must be force in spontaneous generation. It may as well be divine as undivine,

of God as not of God. God can create as really by spontaneous generation as by any other generation. In fact science in suggesting spontaneous generation as the manner of creation has come nearer than any other theory has ever come to the old fashioned notion of creation out of nothing. Spontaneous creation is as sensible a phrase as spontaneous generation. And if we save God in creation we save all that has any moral value. The method of creation by God does not matter.

But if we cannot settle yet on any story or description of creation as final, we have reached a point where we are compelled to say that the first living products of creation were exceedingly simple forms of life; and as to man, that the first creatures by any possibility called human were creatures of very low type in all respects, physical, intellectual and moral. There are countless "silent centuries that lie behind recorded history," "unmeasured worlds of prehistoric man," shading off more and more, the farther back we go, towards the lower orders of creation in the characteristics of life. We catch occasional glimpses of upright forms among the denizens of the forest, weaponed with

clubs, shaggy-locked creatures, fierce-eyed, with ideas of home and family undeveloped, lairing and pairing like the beasts, hardly more than prophecies of man as he is to-day, and yet these were the human beings of that far away time. The author of the poem of creation seems to have a considerable sense of the conditions in which primitive man lived. He sees man living at first in a natural garden, or rather a grove—for there is no mention of anything but trees as growing there. These trees furnish all the food that is spoken of. It is not till later that man becomes an agriculturist, begins to labor, eating his food in the sweat of his face, and beginning that battle with thorns and thistles, "weeds," which the agricultural life has been since that day. Man wears no clothes, and, except in respect of the perversion of his moral nature, which has not yet taken place, is wholly savage. He has not a single one of the arts or implements which come with skill of hand. He is the simplest conceivable child of nature. He is expressly said not to know the difference between good and evil.

The latest and best equipped science has not a word of fault to find with the description of

primitive man thus far. It is simply a poetic, idyllic version of the actual state of the original man. Science offers some criticism, but by no means as much as is generally supposed, upon the details of the story of man and his entrance upon the moral stage of his history. The features supplied by the childish credulity and superstition of the age, the trees with moral quality in their fruit, one with power to make man know good and evil, the other with power to confer immortality, the speaking snake, the coming down of God to walk in the garden in the cool of the day, science has to explain as the early fashions of man's speaking about such things. But with what is after all the real thing offered to men to think about in this story science makes no issue. To the form of the story of the forbidden fruit we may take exception in the name of better information about God and His ways, but with the substance of it we may still entirely agree.

The form we are all familiar with. The first human pair, living as yet in unconsciousness of evil, are forbidden, under heavy penalty, to eat of the fruit of a certain tree. Tempted by a snake the woman does eat, and tempted by the woman

the man then eats also. This disobedience God makes the occasion of their expulsion from the garden, and a change in his relations to them. Sin has begun to be and its consequences have **begun to darken human life.**

But leaving the form of the story to its fate along with all other myths and traditions in which the early ages treasured up what they could understand of the great truths of faith, what is its reality? What was the original sin as we can see it inside this picturesque costume of antiquity? Let us read the story in modern language. We go back to a time before the dawn of a moral sense in man. He is living, as the author of the story in Genesis describes him, in entire unconsciousness of evil like the beasts his neighbors. But he has lived long enough so. He has been growing long enough for something better. He has come into possession of powers differentiating him still more than ever from his beast neighbors. It is time he began to know himself better in his difference from them. In physical development he has probably reached a very high point. In intellectual development he has made considerable progress. But his moral education has not yet begun. He has no

conception of good and evil in the moral sense. Now his divine Creator and Guardian knows the time has come for a step forward and upward. He gives some man, some peculiarly fine grained man, first of all the prophets, seers, saviors of his race, an idea; the idea of a moral quality in acts. This is the beginning of the process of divine revelation, the earliest point in man's progress at which such a revelation was possible, the initial point of moral intelligence. O, momentous hour! When the first man so gifted with insight beyond his fellows, so honored of God in being made the custodian of divine revelation, sat and thought in wonder as he saw this idea dawning in the dark sky of his mind! The birth hour of the moral life of man!

It is immaterial what act God first showed man in the light of moral responsibility. It is essential that somehow, sometime, God did first show man some act in the light of the difference between right and wrong. For the moral discipline of man had to begin thus, that most vital of all the lines of human progress along which man is traveling towards his high destiny as God's son. This is the essential thing in both accounts, that of the earliest religious record and

the latest scientific explanation, and in this way they are both brought closely at one.

But there is no sin yet. There cannot be until man has chosen and acted under this new sense of responsibility, in the light of knowledge of good from evil. Although men had been doing this very thing for endless generations, they did not sin in it, for they had done it naturally as the beasts, their neighbors, had done it, and as the beasts, their neighbors, might continue to do it, in utter unconsciousness of any moral quality in it, and so without sin. For where there is no law there is no transgression. But now imagine the man in this new and strange situation. Face to face with an act his desire solicits him to do, which perhaps the momentum of habit carries him on towards doing, but checked at the threshold of it by a simple, a novel sense of having no right to do it. His scruple has a shadow of fear, he is dumbly conscious that it would be better for him not to do it. But this new feeling is weak, his desire is strong, the momentum of habit pushes him, he is guarded by no experience of the evil he fears—and he acts as he wants to act and now for the first time in his life he sins, and for the first time in his life he feels after sin the inevitable

repentance, as new and strange a feeling as was the scruple which so unsuccessfully opposed his action.

The modern analyst of this far away experience of the first human sin, the original sin, will depict the scene in much quieter colors than those which the poet of Genesis used. Just as science confesses the beginnings of life hidden away in processes too delicate and spiritual to be seen by the eye, so we must suppose that the first, the original, sin was an exceedingly minute and inconspicuous thing. It may have been the faintest conception of moral quality consistent with the slightest moral responsibility. Its real significance may have baffled the man into whose life this experience had come. It may have taken centuries for the fact of moral responsibility to come out clearly into men's consciousness, but from the time that the first least resistance was offered to the Spirit of God taking of the things afterward so wonderfully represented in Christ and showing them unto men, sin was in the world. At that instant sin entered into the world, that was the original sin.

All this the poet of Genesis magnifies into a single large and conspicuous experience. He

does not see the perspective of actual history and brings the developed consciousness of sin and guilt into immediate connection with the first act of sin of which for that purpose he makes the man acutely aware. He condenses the moral history of centuries into a single day. But that is simply the fault of his historical sense, not of his moral insight. The nature of the original sin he accurately indicates, although the form of it he paints after the fashion of his times.

Theology has misread the bible story in one most important particular. The bible paints primitive man as a mild, innocent savage. Theology has changed this true picture into one of a perfect man, so perfect that all that the work of Christ was designed to do is to restore man to his original condition. It has had to make the original sin of man therefore his fall at one immeasurable plunge from the highest felicity into the moral depths from which Christ came to lift him again. The bible no more warrants this use of the story than science does. The bible and science agree in all essential respects in teaching that the first sin was the first experience in moral discipline, and that the first recovery after the first sin was the beginning of man's moral prog-

ess. And the man standing upon this experience of sin and repentance and discovery of the moral order was on a higher level of life than before he sinned. It was a stumble rather than a fall; a stumble over the first step in the stairway which was to lead him to moral excellence. It was the opening of the moral eye, the first perception of moral condition. The first man who gathered himself together after sinning and through repentance and effort to realize the better things that he knew, struggled to his feet, was the pioneer in that magnificent spiritual movement which is not to cease until humanity is brought to its goal, not in Adam again but in Christ.

The Adam of Genesis and the Adam of theology are very far apart. The Adam of Genesis and the primitive man of science are very near together. And they are both the world's moral diameter's distance away from the Christ, who is God expressed in the flesh, that is in humanity, at the same time that he is man alive with the spirit of God, as humanity is one day to be.

Romans 8:6—"The Mind of the Flesh is Death."
(Revised Version.)

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE NATURE OF SIN.

WE HAVE considered the original sin as a fact, an event. We have seen something of its nature also. But to the study of that, directly, we ought now to give our attention. What is the nature of sin? What is its philosophy or theory?

Paul says "the mind of the flesh is death." He adds that the mind of the spirit is life. It must be plain that the word mind is used here in a special sense. It is not the mind as the thinking power, the intellectual faculty in man, but rather the will, purpose, disposition. The man whose will, purpose, disposition, is fleshly is a sinner. Sin is the fleshly disposition.

Passing on thus from the study of the act of sin to the study of sin as a disposition we are getting at the nature, the philosophy, of the thing, sin. At first, to be sure, there seems to be a quality of sin or guilt in acts which is not to be found in mere disposition or intention. Our laws recog-

nize a difference between the two things and punish only acts. No court would venture to inflict a penalty on a man for his wrong disposition so long as he was innocent of actual crime. And popular judgment supports this interpretation by the law of its functions. The finer judgment of the ethical sense of men, however, does not wholly endorse this distinction. For the disposition is the real seat of moral quality. There is no moral quality in the act apart from the disposition. If a man unintentionally does what looks like a wrong thing, if his act is contrary to his disposition, his intention, which is the real expression of his disposition, clears the act of wrong quality. Law recognizes this principle in so far as it acquits a man of wrong doing who can prove that he had no intention of wrong in his act, or who can show that he was forced into the act against his will.

We catch sight of a profound truth in these things, the truth that sin in the disposition is the real sense of sin; both because there can be no sin in act which is not first in disposition, and because a disposition to sin is character while the act of sin is merely a sign of character. Jesus teaches this truth clearly. In the sermon on the

mount. He forces attention away from the act of murder to the feeling of anger as the significant thing and from other acts to other feelings, dispositions lying at their root, in the same way. To the same effect is His scorn of hypocrisy, the essence of which is the separation of acts from disposition and the giving of moral quality to acts which belongs only to disposition.

It is undoubtedly due to their deep sense of the moral significance of the disposition that Christian theologians have taught their doctrine of original sin. That sin is so universal, the fact apparently indisputable that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, has required some explanation more satisfactory than that each man has sinned independently in his turn; some common ground for this common behavior. And so they found it in an original sinful disposition. It was not, however, until Augustine's time, in the fifth century, that Christian teachers began to say that the original disposition to sin was inherited from Adam. Augustine taught that Adam's sin totally depraved his whole nature and that this depravity was hereditary in all men. This doctrine has taken two forms; one, the more reasonable, that men inherit a sinful dispo-

sition from their ancestry precisely as they do other characteristics, but that while they actually sin because of their sinful disposition not till they actually sin are they guilty; another, that men not only inherit sinful dispositions, but real guilt, from the original sinner; they are sinners, guilty and under the wrath of God, from the instant they are born. The ethical difficulty of making a baby born in 1899 guilty of Adam's sin is overcome by saying that all humanity, the baby included, was in Adam when he sinned. And so all humanity, the baby with the rest, had a share in the responsibility and guilt of the sin.

This was the accepted theology when the famous New England Primer was made for the instruction of the primary pupils in the public schools.

In Adam's fall
We sinned all,

is simply the popular rendering of the theology of the period.

The fleshly mind, the sinful disposition, which our fathers called original sin, and with the explanation of which they wrestled so heroically, remains the great problem for solution in any study of the question of the nature of sin. It is

the stubborn fact which we cannot evade or suppress. We shall desire neither to evade nor suppress it if we really know what it is. No truth seen in all its relations is offensive to the moral sense of man. It will prove a relief to the strained ethical sensibilities to discover the relation which evolution discloses between the original sin and the original disposition to sin.

Right here we come upon one of the vital differences between ancient and modern theology. Augustine and his followers do not admit any original disposition to sin in the first man. Man was created perfect. He fell through a temptation which came from without, from the devil, who solicited him to evil. The disposition to sin with which man has been afflicted ever since was a consequence of the fall. But quite in contrast with this at all points is the view which is forced upon Christian scholarship by the demonstrations of science. Man was created not perfect but very imperfect. He began to live on a very low plane of existence. For a long time he had no experience of evil simply because he did not know the difference between good and evil. He had experience enough of what would have been evil if he had had moral intelligence to make it so,

but because where there is no law there is no transgression, he was still innocent. But in his animal nature he had a disposition which was liable to become evil the instant he knew moral responsibility. There was an original disposition to the mind of the flesh which is sin. For the coming of that instant in the moral history of man when this original, natural disposition to the mind of the flesh was put under check by a sense of right, God was responsible. The original temptation was not a solicitation to evil, but a check put upon the natural mind of the flesh, the original disposition to live after the law of the flesh. It was a prompting to good and had its source, as has been said, in God and not in the devil. God tempted the first man in the only sense in which He ever tempts any man, to test and advance him. The first strain upon man's moral strength came with God's command not to do, not with the devil's solicitation to do something wrong.

The description by Paul of his own experience applies perfectly to the experience of the first man who sinned and of every man who sins. It is the perfect theory and philosophy of sin. "I had not known sin except through the law. The

commandment, which was unto life, I found to be unto death, for sin finding occasion through the commandment beguiled me and through it slew me." Man's original condition was one of irresponsibility and immorality. He did not "know law." His peril lay in the necessity of ascent from that level through a newly perceived law. That peril, in the form of that law, God put there. He was the one who had hold of man's hand leading him. He was teaching him to use his moral legs, to walk, to climb. The moral child stumbled, to be sure, but it was better to learn to walk by stumbling than to be carried forever in his Father's arms. He would have been a moral baby forever thus coddled and petted. This is the second great point of difference between the fifth and the twentieth century ideas of the original disposition of man to sin, that the first testing of man's moral strength was the work of God, not of the devil, and was an incitement to a better life, not a solicitation to a worse one.

The third difference is in that the ancient theory made the disposition to sin the consequence of the so-called fall, while the modern theory makes it the cause of it, or at least the occasion. Of course there

are consequences of the original sin. Character no more determines conduct than conduct reacts upon character. There was change in the disposition, the character, of the original sinner as the result of his sin. It was such a change as was dependent upon his coming to consciousness of himself. But it is quite wrong to call it with Augustine depravity or corruption. As matter of fact the disposition of man, not originally evil, only capable of evil through knowledge, while disturbed and modified in many ways by the coming into it of moral consciousness, was improved by that experience; not improved by sin, but by the repentance which followed sin and by the strength which came with discipline. Here are the steps once more: an original condition without moral knowledge and therefore innocent; the revelation by God of moral quality in life; the first failure to bear the test God's new and higher requirement put upon man's strength; discovery through sense of guilt of new significance in life; struggle to rise to these higher planes; progress. The progress of humanity from this initial moral experience has never been checked. The spirit of God, leading His child through that momentous trial, has led him

ever. Failures many there have been, seeming ruin of individuals and races and civilizations, but there is a shining track of progress from the beginning till now along which the best representatives of the race have steadily mounted from the low original level of animalism where men lived in the mind of the flesh, without knowledge of anything better, up and up and up into the life which is the mind of the spirit towards the Christ-goal they are some time to reach.

The disposition to sin, then, this original sinful nature which all men seem to have—what is it? Now what it has always been, now what it was in the case of the original sinner, the disposition of the mind of the flesh; in other words, man's brute inheritance. Not unmodified as it was in primitive man; modified in a thousand untraceable ways by the complex interactions of life between the first man and the modern man, but in essence the same animal nature which was early man's too preponderant part when first his spiritual nature demanded recognition and claimed sovereignty in his life.

The world wide drama of sin is a very simple matter after all in its philosophy and analysis: it is the drag of the animal nature upon the spirit-

ual; the insurgency, in the new kingdom of life opened by spiritual knowledge, of impulses and lusts which reigned unchallenged in the kingdom of animal ignorance. Paul puts it clearly: I delight in the law of God after the interior, i. e., the spiritual, man, but I see a different law in my members, i. e., my animal part, the mind of the flesh, warring against the law of my mind, i. e., my better judgment, my spiritual understanding, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:23.) The law of sin which is in the members is simply the animal tendency which has its way in pure animalism without hindrance or harm, as long as no higher law of the spirit is known. But the Spirit of God informing it makes the spirit of man the masterful part of man, and when the spirit appears in its royal authority the animal nature must obey or fight, and the fighting of the flesh against the spirit is sin. All the teaching of the scriptures about the flesh is consistent with this. The life of the flesh is synonymous with sin, is the common description of sin and its end is death. So the life of the spirit, life in the spirit, is life indeed, eternal life. "And the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit

against the flesh." In this eternal antagonism is the moral history of man.

All sin therefore is one, and its nature is simple. The mind of the flesh is sin. The sinful disposition is the comprehensive animal nature, originally innocent but morally poisoned by disobedience to the higher authority of the spirit. How this infection has extended to all human life, how its virulence is sometimes such that the ugliness and madness of sin have come to bewilder the minds of men and make them think it a divine punishment, we cannot now stop to consider. But all evil disposition is one in essence, however modified, however magnified. It is humanity's brute inheritance, carrying on the war of the flesh against the spirit. And sins, sins of act, are simply the incidents in this war, the insurgent deeds of the poor slaves of the flesh in battle with their rightful lord the spirit.

There are two suggestions which ought to be of practical use: First, the gravity of knowledge of the right, the part knowledge has in bringing sin out in a disposition which has otherwise no moral quality. It is vitally necessary that we shall see how knowledge instantly affects moral character and determines responsibility, or our dis-

cussion of this question of the nature of sin will remain an abstract matter without clinch upon life at any practical point. Jesus abundantly and clearly teaches this truth. He says, in John 9:41, speaking of the false-hearted Pharisees: "If you were blind you would have no sin; but now you say 'We see,' your sin remains." If they had been ignorant of the things in which He charged them with sin, the charge would not have been made nor they held to any responsibility. In John 15:22, He speaks to the same effect. "If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin." Paul says in Rom. 5:13: "Sin is not imputed" or reckoned "where is no law." What a fearful weight of responsibility rests on knowledge of right! What a magician's wand is this knowledge, with power to transform an innocent act in an instant into a sin and brand the sinner as guilty! Still we cannot, we would not refuse knowledge, although it increases our responsibility, our culpability, if we do not live up to it. What straits we are in! Happy in ignorance, tempted to say, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," knowing full well that to know the right is to come under the divine imperative to do the right, and that to fail to do the right

when we know it will increase our sin, and that knowledge of the right is the only possible way upward and onward in moral progress, and yet our brute inheritance is so delightful, to indulge our desires is so blissful, to be allowed to sleep in happy indifference to the requirements of the higher nature is such a temptation—truly, Paul expresses the minds of all of us when he says, “Oh, wretched man that I am!”

Second. This view of what sin is brings out in clear light the nature of sins of omission. Casuists have distinguished between sins committed and sins through failure to do right and duty. But there is no such refuge for sinners by omission as casuistry has tried to build. The Westminster Catechism is exactly right when it says, “Sin is any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God.” A higher authority than the Westminster Catechism says, “To him that knoweth to do right and doeth it not to him it is sin.” And we see how it must be so. To refuse to obey the law of the mind, to obey instead the law of the members, to fail to live in the spirit and to live in the flesh, to turn a deaf or defiant ear to the Spirit of God laying upon us some command essential to the spiritual life and to sink out

of the spiritual man into the animal man, is, of course, to sin. It is so easy to sin by neglect; no earnestness, no energy is required. So easy to sin by indifference, by letting things simply go, without too much anxiety or resistance! Need that be said which all know, how lazy, indifferent neglect to live in the spirit, to rise upon the commands of God along an inclined plane of moral life, inevitably means to settle into animalism? We refine our animalism in modern days. We eat and drink elegantly, we travel luxuriously, we satiate our senses with choice indulgences of many kinds, with amusements and social dissipation, we guard our speech against vulgarities or veil our coarser thoughts in euphemisms, but it all may be essentially the animal life. There may be no energetic insurgence in it against the command of God, no actual sin committed against any positive law of morals, but it distinctly is not the life of the spirit, and is a refuge in merely refined animalism for the spiritually feeble and careless, a bed of sensual indulgence on which the spirit wastes away and dies.

Sins of omission are our besetting sins. God's call to good is as positive as His warning against evil, His summons to duty as vital to our spirit-

ual welfare as His injunctions against wickedness. The curse against Meroz was called down upon it because its inhabitants stayed in their tents, because they did not come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. It is not an artificial curse; the curse of spiritual inaction works automatically and organically. The brute inheritance asserting itself, the law of the members serving animalism fastening its chains upon our spiritual powers, reducing them to weakness and stifling the life of the spirit, that is the curse which blights the spiritually lazy or careless man. From which may God deliver us all.

Mark 3:29—"Guilty of an Eternal Sin."

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE FATAL SIN.

IN THE same class with an original sin which had the mysterious faculty of plunging the first man from perfection of condition and character down into total depravity and his descendants with him, our theological fathers believed in an unpardonable sin which in an equally mysterious way involved men in irremediable ruin. This fatal, unpardonable, sin is our subject in this chapter.

We shall consider first the scriptural grounds for the belief in such a sin and then its connection with the idea of sin as we have gained it from our work already done.

1. The scriptural grounds for the doctrine of an unpardonable sin. There are two of those whose teachings make up the New Testament who have something to say about this sin, Jesus himself and his intimate disciple, John. Jesus' words are reported by each one of the first three evangelists. John is silent about it in his gospel

but speaks of it in his first letter. Luke's version of what Jesus said need not detain us because it is very brief and contains nothing not also contained in the others. Matthew makes Jesus say (12:31, 32) "Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but"—i. e., except that—"the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." Mark's version of the same words is (3:28, 29) "All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but"—i. e., except that—"whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin, because they said He hath an unclean spirit."

The words of John are in his first epistle, 5:16, "If a man see his brother sin a sin not unto death he shall ask and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; not concerning that do I say that he should make request." John's entire meaning is

expressed in the statement that there is a sin unto death, for which he evidently thinks it is useless to pray. He does not give us any light upon the sin itself, as to what the sin is. We need therefore examine only Matthew's and Mark's versions of what Jesus said to get his thought about the unpardonable sin.

An important point to be ascertained first is what occasioned Jesus' words. What were the circumstances under which he spoke them? What was he speaking at? Matthew and Mark agree perfectly in their account of the circumstances. Jesus was casting out devils. Certain Pharisees looking on in an intensely unfriendly attitude began to criticise. They could not deny the fact and so they tried to destroy the influence of the miracle with the people by an infamous explanation of Jesus' singular power. They said he was in league with the evil spirits, that he himself worked by devil-power, that the evil spirits which seemed to obey him in reality obeyed their prince, Beelzebub, whose agent Jesus was. Jesus made a very simple and evident reply. He said it was incredible that Beelzebub should work against his own interests in that way. It was like a house divided against

itself. If Beelzebub's kingdom were thus divided against itself how long would it continue? Then he said, prompted by the spirit shown in their insinuation that he was in collusion with the devil, aroused by their abusive antagonism to the Holy Spirit of God by whom he was actuated, "God is one who forgives to the uttermost. You may blaspheme me, say what you will against me, and he will forgive it. All sin, all blasphemy he will forgive, but—to sin against the Holy Spirit, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit as you have done in calling the Spirit of God the prince of devils, is a sin beyond forgiveness. Neither in this world nor in that which is to come will this sin be forgiven." These fearful words seem to be provoked by their insufferable insult to the Spirit of God, blackguarding and vilifying that Spirit as the very spirit of evil.

Thus far the two evangelists go together. But Mark has more to say. If we had only Matthew's version of the incident we might be left without resource except to say that God regards the act of slander of the Holy Spirit as a thing beyond divine endurance. He will endure anything else but he will not endure that. But Mark helps us to avoid such a strange and

unnatural conclusion, a conclusion so foreign to the fairness of God. Mark shows the way of a profounder insight into the philosophy of Jesus' words. But to get this help from Mark we must read him in the revised version. The significant words are the last words in the passage: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit has never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin, because they said 'He has an unclean spirit'." These words bring out Jesus' thought in two particulars: first, the blasphemer against the Holy Spirit is not simply in danger of something, he is guilty of something. Whatever the dread consequence of his sin it is the direct result of his guilt. The burden of the severity of the penalty is taken off the anger of God which is supposed to be aroused by the insult to the Holy Spirit and is put on the man's guilt. He is not merely condemned, he is a guilty man: the thing he has done is in itself such a terrible thing that it registers the deepest guilt in the character. But, secondly, guilty of what? Jesus says of eternal sin. He does not threaten penalty on grounds insufficient to satisfy the ethical sense, but he says the man is guilty of a sin, literally, according to the Greek, in the power or

“grasp” of a sin which is in its nature eternal, that is, the man sins eternally. How is God going to forgive a man who keeps on sinning eternally? Such a sin is forever unforgiven.

Correctly understood, Jesus is not here ascribing such fatal consequences to any act of sin in itself, but to the disposition out of which such an act springs. In other words, the fatal, or unpardonable sin, is a disposition and not an act. This will appear from the reason Mark gives for Jesus’ words. This reason was that the Pharisees had said that He, Jesus, had an unclean spirit. These words should be attentively studied, for they contain the philosophy of the conduct of Christ. Their saying that He had an unclean, filthy spirit, was the reason why He warned them against the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What does that imply? Here were men so spiritually perverted that they could not, or at least did not, know the difference between the Spirit of God in Jesus and the spirit which energizes devils. Or they were so mad against the Spirit of God manifested in Jesus that they were blind to his divineness and insensible to his influence. What must we say of a man who is so perverted, morally, that he does

not know the Spirit of God, when shown him, from the spirit of devils? Whose mind is so wrong that the good seems to him to be evil; the divine devilish? Whose disposition is so distorted that he hates the good when he sees it? What is that man's likelihood of forsaking evil and escaping sin? Will he not continue to choose evil, eternally, so long as that is his disposition? But that was precisely the case with the men against whom Jesus spoke these terrible words. It was not against their words simply apart from their dispositions; it was not any arbitrary sentence of an angry or insulted God, it was a philosophical and rational induction from that state of mind they were in, the moral obliquity of which their actions disclosed. Keep in that state of mind, continue to live in that antagonism to the Spirit of God, retain that disposition so hostile, that opinion so blasphemous to the Spirit of God which is manifest in those words and deeds of mine which you so savagely condemn, and you are in the maelstrom of sin which is in its very nature eternal. That is the eternal principle of sin, hostility to the Spirit of God. It is in the very nature of the case impossible for this disposition to be for-

given so long as it continues. An eternal sin is not susceptible of forgiveness. The only possible hope for such men as these Pharisees were must be in the escape from that disposition, that moral attitude towards Jesus, that moral blindness as to the Spirit of God moving and determining him.

2. How is the unpardonable sin related to the sin we have been speaking of in the preceding chapters?

We have seen that the original sin was a sin committed by a moral child. It was sin, however, because it had all the elements which constitute sin in every case, choice of the worse in spite of knowledge of the better; the will taking up arms for the flesh against the sovereignty of the spirit. This is always the essence of sin, the conscious preference of the worse to the better, of the life in the flesh to the life in the spirit. Sinning has many forms and many degrees but in essence it is always this, as Paul so graphically describes it, "A law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." That law of the members is the momentum of the animal life,

the brute inheritance continuing in the human life, while the law of the mind is the new endowment which comes with promotion into humanity, the contribution of the spirit to the partnership into which spirit and flesh have entered in man. The original sin was disobedience to this law of the spirit; all sin is disobedience to the law of the spirit; the unpardonable sin is disobedience to the law of the spirit, nothing more, nothing less, except that the unpardonable sin differs from the original sin in the degree of disobedience to the law of the spirit represented in it. The original sin and the unpardonable sin are at the opposite extremes of human experience of sin: one was a feeble and unsuccessful struggle to rise into the life of the spirit when the life of the spirit was first offered to man as a scene of conduct and character; the other is the final and complete subsidence into the life of the flesh, every voice of the spirit stifled, every impulse to live in the spirit dead. The unpardonable sin is the original sin, or any sin, persisted in until sensitiveness to the spirit of God is dead, gone. Sin full-grown has brought forth death. The fatal element in the situation in which Jesus found the Pharisees was their dead sensitiveness

to the spirit of God. A man is beyond hope when he has finally lost that. The life in the spirit is impossible to him.

It is essential that we understand the meaning of the life of the spirit. The pivotal event in evolution or creation is the birth of man into the life of the spirit. In other words, the birth of man into the life of the spirit is the entrance of God into man in that way, which, in its perfection, produces the sinlessness of Jesus. Jesus is not essentially different from Adam in his physical organization. But God was in Jesus, the life of the spirit was in him, and he lived the life of the spirit perfectly, and therein consists the essential difference between Jesus and all men from the lowest to the highest. The first experience by man of birth into the spirit was the prophecy of Jesus' perfect life in the spirit, the initiation of the spiritualizing of the creation. The spirit into which man was born was God. The law of the spirit under which man came was God. Man's failure to appreciate the dignity and significance of this spirit, this law, was a failure to appreciate God, and was the same thing in essence with the failure of the Pharisees to appreciate the spirit which was in Jesus.

Man's preference of the law of the flesh to the law of the higher nature was a choice against God, a turning of the affections and the life by however small an angle away from God. Now imagine the movement of life away from this beginning. The original sin repeats itself in a long experience of sinning, each sin like the first one a turning away from God, a preference of the lower over the higher life. Habit and character meanwhile are taking form in harmony with this persistence of preference of the lower life. Finally persistence in choice against the spirit of God, preference for the life of the flesh, has trained the judgments, the affections, the choices, into habitual antagonism against the spirit of God. God and evil have changed places in the judgment and affections. Evil is preferred to God. The germ of antagonism to the spirit which was in the original sin has grown into the set of the life against God which Jesus found in the Pharisees, the development of the whole moral nature into solid opposition to God, the most fatal feature of which is the perfect insensibility of the man to the nature of the sin he is committing.

The moral nature is at first like ore, all beautiful possibilities are in it. But it must be smelted and forged and wrought before it can be made into the form of beauty and use for which it was intended. Its destiny is settled in the fire. Suppose it comes out slag. If there be anywhere those who have sunk into that moral condition which we call the unpardonable sin, they are the slag of the moral universe. And as slag is removed from the ore by the distance between the beginning and end of its subjection to the discipline of the furnace, so moral nature indurated in sin and gone beyond the possibility of influence by the Spirit of God, is separated from the innocence which was marred by the first sin by the distance of a whole moral experience of testing and failure.

Is this hopeless condition, this unpardonable sin, a real moral condition, or only a possible one? Is it the actual wreck of life for any, or only a warning, a red light, put before humanity for its safety? Certainly, if such a wreck of life be not possible there is no need of the warning. If such a wreck of life be not actual it can only be because men have heeded the warning. If the peril is not real for us

to-day, the peril of committing the unpardonable sin, it must be because we are living in the spirit. We need not live in terror of mysterious sins in ambush, traps in the pathway of life, moral puzzles given us by God, the solution of which depends upon chance or unknowable conditions. God help us to banish every superstitious fear of mysterious and unknown sin from our hearts. Unpardonable sins of that sort should go with ghosts and hobgoblins and devils. But the danger of sinking into the quagmire of the lower life is an imminent danger, the most imminent of all dangers. The danger of hardening into insensibility to the influence of the Spirit of God is a grave danger and the gravest of all dangers. The life of the spirit is the only safe life, as it is the only life worth living, the only life which differentiates man from the brute and unifies him with God.

How shall we know whether or not we are in need of the warning Jesus gave the Pharisees? There is but one way: to test ourselves by the circumstances which tested them; to put Christ before our hearts as He was put before theirs. We know what they thought of Him, and we know why they thought about Him as they did.

They thought or they said, that He was a fraud, a bad man, an agent of the devil. How grossly mistaken they were! But why did they make this terrible mistake? Simply because Jesus put upon them the law of the spirit which clashed with the lower law of self-interest which their lives followed. They would have admired and worshipped Him if what they believed their interests had allowed it, but they were so under the rule of their self interest that their eyes were blinded to His divine excellence and they hated Him for his very goodness. It is a fatal thing to hate goodness. This is precisely the peril of many of us to-day, I am convinced. Abstractly we honor and admire Christ but His law of the spirit is too severe for us. It clashes with those laws of the lower life by which we live. We do not develop into the same personal bitterness towards Jesus which was the Pharisees' shame and ruin. We are perhaps saved from that by Christ's absence. If He were to personally urge His high claims upon us, I tremble to think how we would treat Him. But it does not much better the situation, make our case much better than that of the Pharisees, if without their personal bitterness and abuse we ob-

stinately persist in resisting the Spirit of God seeking to lift us up into Christ's ideals, and Christ's devotions, and Christ's activities, His sacrifices for the sake of the life of the spirit among men, as they did. The vital question is are we doing this which, apart from the circumstances peculiar to the time, was the essential seed of death in their sin. Are we coöperating with the Spirit of God tugging away at our hearts to lift them up into love and obedience to the law of the spirit? There may be nothing in our circumstances that is startling; moral change in either direction may be too slow to be noticed without the most careful attention; but if the principle of our lives is the lower law, the law of the flesh, we may be sure that our moral judgments, our moral affections, are steadily growing into the forms which express our choices and make our whole lives consistent with the principle that dominates them. It is only a question of time when any life, however slowly developing in citizenship in the kingdom of the lower nature sinks finally into that thralldom to evil which is the unpardonable, the fatal, sin; when the judgment, the affections, the life are withdrawn from the rescuing influences of

the Spirit of God. The irrepressible conflict in morals, one in character in all the ages, in Adam's original sin, in the world's whole moral history, is between the law of the mind, the Spirit of God, and the law of the members, the flesh. Its battlefield is the soul of man and its issue is in either Christliness or incorrigible, eternal, sin. While earth lasts this conflict will be going on—in all stages. You can see in actual examples every degree of moral quality from Christ down. But the tendency is to differentiation. All are moving towards the goal, one or the other. Some time the separation will be complete, between Christ and humanity transformed into his likeness on the one hand, and wrecks of humanity, sunken, sunken, into eternal sin, on the other. And we are living which life? We are tending whither?

**Colossians 1:14—"Our Redemption, the Forgiveness of
Our Sins."**

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE REMISSION OF SIN.

♦♦ **O** WRETCHED man that I am!" exclaims Paul, wearied and discouraged in the life and death struggle between the spirit and the flesh, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul's question has rung 'round the world. In the honest anguish of his heart he struck the keynote of human experience. His cry has been sustained through the ages by the echoes it has awakened in every earnest soul that has heard it. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Where is the remedy for sin?

Paul's question has not to wait for an answer. It comes on the next breath, with a rush and torrent of exulting faith: "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." There is a law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ which has power to free from the law of sin and death. There is a remedy for sin, there is a way for the sinner out of bondage to sin and death through sin.

Our work at this point is to ascertain if possible what the remedy for sin is; in what the escape from Paul's body of death consists.

Paul thanks God for Christ's part in effecting this remedy, and it would seem a natural next step to take to inquire into that, the work of Christ for our rescue from sin. But I must ask you to wait a little for that. We are not quite ready for it. We are to ask merely what the remedy for sin is. In the next chapter we shall consider Christ's work in mediating it.

The scriptures have many ways of suggesting the character of the remedy for sin. It is called redemption, regeneration, salvation. But the one word which perhaps most directly and simply describes it is the word which we translate forgiveness. Sin is disposed of by being forgiven. When the New Testament writers wish to reduce this idea of salvation to its lowest or simplest terms they say "forgiveness," as if that were the plainest word, the one itself least needing explanation. For instance, in Ephesians 1:7, Paul speaks of redemption and explains it by saying that redemption means the forgiveness of sins. So in Colossians 1:14: "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our

sins"; as if he would say "our redemption, i. e., **the forgiveness of our sins.**"

We might stop right here and call this part of our work done if Paul had written in English, and if we might safely assume to know what he meant by the word, and that he meant what we mean by it. But Paul did not write in English, he wrote in Greek; and much as we regret the necessity we have to depend upon the judgment of translators for the settlement of the question what English word best expresses Paul's thought. And unhappily this judgment is not all one way. Not only is there a difference of opinion among translators, but the same translators do not always have the same mind about the meaning of the word. It is a fair question, and a question which a fair-minded man can not help asking, whether the popular sense of the English word forgiveness gives Paul's meaning.

Forgiveness in the popular sense means very nearly, or quite, the same thing as pardon. But all readers of the New Testament should know that the word pardon never occurs in it. Scholars generally agree that it would be a perversion of any New Testament word used to describe God's treatment of repentant sinners to

translate it by the word pardon. To say that God pardons sin is to get our ideas from Hebrew and not Christian writings. Pardon gets its meaning from transactions in the administration of human justice which have too little connection with character to be compared with the divine forgiveness of the sinner. Divine forgiveness always involves an organic change in character. We are in grave danger, therefore, of perverting one of the vital truths of Christian faith when we say that God pardons sin. And because "forgiveness" of sins, in the popular understanding of the words, means just this, wise translators of Jesus' words and Paul's words do well to show their reluctance to use the word forgiveness.

The New Testament word which is translated forgiveness occurs seventeen times in the New Testament. King James' translators call it forgiveness six times, "remission" nine times and "deliverance" and "liberty" once each. The nineteenth century revisers have reduced the number of times forgiveness is used from six to three and have put in its place each time the word remission. For the original New Testament word they use remission twelve times, forgiveness three times and release and liberty once each.

The New Testament word is connected with the word "sin" eleven times; the revisers translating the phrase "remission of sin" ten times out of the eleven, the only exception to a uniform usage being in Colossians 1:14.

What is the meaning of all this? It is that the New Testament word, the Greek word "aphesis," the word which to the mind of the disciples of Christ who reported His teaching in the Greek language expressed Christ's meaning, the word which Paul used, and Peter, to describe the remedy for sin, is not satisfied by the English word forgiveness; it is a stronger word, and the real meaning of the word, the real character of God's treatment of sin which the New Testament teaches can not be expressed by the word forgiveness.

It would be of the highest service to Christian faith if we were to follow the example of the latest revisers of the New Testament, or even go farther than they did, and substitute the word remission for the word forgiveness wherever it is used in the book. For the proper English New Testament word is remission and remission of sin is the right English New Testament phrase for the remedy of sin.

Let us look at the word a moment, this important word remission. It is derived from the Latin word meaning to send. The idea of "sending" is at the core of it. The remission of sin is not the covering of sin, an idea which is sometimes found in the Old Testament, or the forgetting of sin, or the ignoring of sin—which the pardon of sin or forgiveness of sin in the sense of pardon may mean—but the sending away of sin. The word comes into our religious language through the early translations of the Greek New Testament into Latin. The first attempts to make an English bible were translations from these ancient Latin versions. But the Greek word, in the original language and form of the New Testament, the word *aphesis*, has the same root meaning—to send away, and so remission is a close translation of it. The "aphesis" of sin, the remission of sin, the true New Testament idea, is the sending away of sin, the getting rid of it. When God deals with sin effectively, saves men from it, He does not pardon sin, cover it up, forget it, ignore it, but He rids men of it, gets them clear of it.

As a matter of fact when men speak of God's pardon or forgiveness of sin, not uncommonly

they have in mind the penalty rather than the sin. The thing accomplished in pardon, in human justice, is the getting rid of the penalty. The criminal's character is not affected, but his condition and relation to the law. But in divine justice there can be no such pardon which affects the penalty without affecting the character. And there is a simple reason for this. Human penalties are artificial and mechanical, divine penalties are natural and vital, organic, are in the nature of strict consequences; human penalties depend upon the detective ability of the police and the wisdom and will of the judge; they can be increased or diminished, imposed or remitted, as the judicial authorities please; but divine penalties are self recording, and the registry of sin in the character, which is the real penalty, is susceptible of no modification by the will of a judge. A man may be a criminal still and be pardoned, guilty really although not legally liable to the penalty for his crime, but no man can be a sinner and not have the divine law register his sin in the natural consequences in his soul, his character. There is no such thing possible as remitting penalties in the divine government without first remitting sin. The consequence

goes when the cause goes and not before. It is this profound truth, this essential meaning of the New Testament word remission, which has suffered eclipse in Christian understanding by the intrusion of an idea of forgiveness drawn from the human process of pardon. How unanimous the early teachers of the gospel were in grasping and emphasizing this profound truth, as Jesus Christ taught it, is shown in the fact that no New Testament writer ever uses the word *aphesis* of penalty or consequences. They never used the word, that is, except intelligently and rationally.

It is safe to say that the popular faith of Christendom needs reconstruction at this point quite as much as at any other that can be named. There is no incidental consequence of the perversion of the Father-God idea of Jesus into the Emperor-God idea of medieval theology by the warping influence of monarchical habits of thought, more disastrous in its effects upon the common faith of the church than the emphasis which has fallen upon the wilfulness of the action of the divine love. God's love has been represented as working like a Roman emperor's love, decreeing this and that without other reason than

His own will, suspending the laws of the moral realm at pleasure, issuing writs of habeas corpus to rescue favored sinners out of the hands of justice.

Modern influences upon Christian thought, light raying upon it from scientific convictions about the dignity of natural law, have wonderfully helped in rescuing it from the unworthy and dangerous views about God which so long left the moral universe in the hands of an omnipotent Caesar. But the balance wheel of Christian faith in God has always been, as it is to-day, Christ's conception of a loving Father whose will is one with His eternal plan and purpose of a perfect creation. God's love's action is never wilful. It is never a suspension of justice or law. Love is the law of God; love is the justice of God administered by the perfect wisdom which never has to retreat behind despotism to hide its weakness. God's laws as they have stood from eternity are abundantly equal to the evolution of a perfect humanity; there is no need of a revision or suspension; God's love has in eternal law and justice its absolutely perfect instruments for the care of creation.

An emperor who interferes with law at will thereby simply confesses that he is not wise enough to devise a perfect law or powerful enough to work by his law and still achieve the highest results. His despotism is a shield for his lack of wisdom and his weakness. The idea of an Emperor-God who remits penalties, in default of law, is a sad declension from the idea of a God who had wisdom in the first place to devise laws which should never need suspension, and has power enough in the second place to get rid of seeming evil results of the law without mending or displacing the law, not by the suspension of penalty but by the destruction of sin. Too often the idea of a God who suspends penalties has worked in practical life as it usually works in human governments. The governor's pardoning power is a dangerous prerogative. It is apt to be exerted in favor of criminals who are better off in prison, criminals whose pardon is a menace to society. Pardon is apt to teach men to despise the law by the ease with which it shows its penalties can be escaped. So in morals. The theory that sin does not necessarily involve punishment, that it is quite possible to sin flagrantly and persistently up to the death hour and still

be pardoned by God so as not to suffer the penalty, has practically nullified the fear of sin and the strict sense of its sinfulness and trained men in expecting impossible happiness in heaven by a suspension, by divine pardon, of eternal laws of retribution.

Christ was sent of God on a vastly mightier enterprise than to publish to men God's amnesty, or to procure that amnesty from a Father of infinite love. Christ's enterprise was to eradicate sin from human hearts, to destroy the work of the devil; the Lamb of God was to take away the sin of the world. Peter put it practically when he said to the Jews after Pentecost, "Unto you God sent Christ to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

It is of great importance that we should see that the remedy for sin is not a reconsideration of the original motion in the divine legislation for creation, that it is not an amendment to the original draft of the divine constitution of the moral universe. Wisdom in government less than divine is compelled to make such shift as it can in constantly changing legislation to suit changing circumstances. Often emergencies arise for which, being new or exceptional, there are no

adequate laws provided and special laws are needed, like martial law in war, for instance, or, what were called in the sixties war measures are justified, although, strictly, unconstitutional. There is nothing analogous to this in the divine government. The end was provided for from the beginning, and if anywhere in God's government a law is what we call broken it does not therefore cease to act. Its efficiency is unchecked and continues straight on in the outworking of the consequences. There is no need to revise it or call in foreign help to enforce it. In the consequences it produces, working upon the disobedient subject, it is still the same perfect provision of the Creator for the excellence of the moral order.

What place has remission of sin in such a perfect and unchangeable moral order?

Let us revert for a moment to the original sin. God's eternal purpose toward the ends of which every law in the moral universe was perfectly adapted was to make a perfect, a divine, man. His laws had been working steadily towards the perfection of the physical evolution, but now a crisis in creation comes, a point has been reached where the physical man is so highly organized

that he is sensitive to moral impressions. By the same divine power which has carried creation thus far the impulse to man's moral life is given. We know the story. The first consequence of moral responsibility was moral fault. We have learned to call it sin. Was this failure of man to come up to the full requirement of the law a condition so new and exceptional as to require a reconsideration of the divine plan for man's evolution into a perfect being, creation into the divine likeness? Was there an abrupt change, a catastrophe, in the divine government? And had God to confess, as many a human ruler has to confess, that His best laid plans had gone wrong? Burns says,

"The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley."

Is the same thing true of God's best laid schemes, and did He have to abandon His original purpose and make a new one to fit the new circumstances?

No! The remedy for sin was in precisely the same law which through the weakness of man had occasioned his sin. It is in that law of the spirit in the revelation of which, the divine invitation in it to step up on a higher plane of life,

was the first test of man's moral character. This law of the spirit of life which occasioned the fall of man, the law which was the occasion of the transgression, is exactly the same law which, obeyed, becomes the remedy for sin. There has been no revision of it, no abrogation of it. The original provision of God for man's perfect evolution remains the sufficient remedy for man's sin. Man has but to obey the same law of the spirit of life by disobedience to which he fell into sin, to cease sinning, get rid of sin, and so realize in his life the divine forgiveness, which is precisely this, the riddance of sin.

The creative process is continuous. It was not finished when it came to the significant points in its process which are indicated in the early chapters of Genesis. When the world was made habitable for man after six or how many geological periods, creation was not finished. When man was put upon the earth and brought to his present highly organized physical condition creation was not finished. Creation is not to be finished until man is perfected, until he is brought to his fulfillment in Christ, until the divine humanity is realized in him. We are in the process of creation now, the most magnifi-

cent stage of creation, the creation of man into his divine ideal. We must learn patience. We know the patience of God in the evolution, the creation, of the animal man; we must learn to think of God's patience also in the evolution, the creation, of the spiritual man. Shall we say, because the idea of the sculptor is not realized by the first blow of the chisel upon the rock, by the first touch of his finger upon the clay, that he must needs change his plan, or his methods? Shall we say, at any time during the progress of the statue towards completion, that the artist is swerving from his original ideal because he has not wrought it out perfectly? Every blow of his mallet, every chip that flies, every touch of his hand, evidences, each in its own way, the steadiness of the artist's purpose. So God, the infinite Artist, planning to make a being of celestial beauty, of divine qualities, out of the clay which was man's physical basis, works long and patiently; O, how long, and how patiently; but with never a stop or a sigh of perplexity or doubt or discouragement. The first touch on the plastic clay left it still imperfect. The divine hand has been modeling it all these centuries and still it is imperfect. But manifestly it is growing in

divine beauty day by day. Divine features appear here and there, divine curves and outlines. The image of God begins to show; the original divine ideal to be plain.

The divine remedy for sin then is simply persistence in that original divine purpose for man which found sin in its way when first it impressed man's mind with its high and significant meaning; is simply the re-urging upon man's mind of the law of the spirit of life, and re-urging it until man acquires what he at first lacked, what he still lacks to such an extent, the power of not sinning. When man acquires that power, the power of not sinning, the agency of sin in him will cease, the agency of sin working death, and in being rid of sin he will be rid of its consequences, be forgiven, in the Christ and Paul sense. Toward this end, this goal, the moral creation tends; toward this end it was directed when God first stood man on his feet and bade him walk by the law of the spirit; toward this goal God has never ceased to set creation's face. When this end is reached man will be indeed saved, which is the same as created, perfected into the original divine ideal, the likeness of Christ. When he learns to live by the law of the

spirit of life, he will, as Paul says, be freed from the law of sin and death.

How then does Christ come in for that glory which the Christian ages have ascribed to him as Savior, Redeemer, Mediator between God and man? To this point, we have come in our examination of sin and its remedy. The next chapter will attempt to so treat the subject of the sinlessness of Jesus as to show the place and relations of the divine man in the scheme of life we are studying.

Meanwhile let no one suspect that all this is emphasis upon the law rather than upon the love of God. God is love. He not simply loves, but is love, and always was. There are not two administrations in God's government, as if God himself were converted midway between the beginning and the end of His administration of man's affairs, converted by Christ's atonement from a belief in and use of law to a belief in and use of love; but God has always governed by love. He created man by love, loved him infinitely when he sinned, loves him no less, no more, in his gift of Christ for his redemption.

Galatians 2:15—"Justified by the Faith of Christ."

**Philippians 3:9—"Righteousness Through the Faith of
Christ."**

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS.

THE first man and Jesus are separated from each other by the entire moral history of man, by the world's moral diameter. They are at the poles of moral character. The moral history of humanity begins in sin through the strength of the flesh, it ends in sinlessness through the strength of the spirit. In other words the sinlessness of Jesus is the goal of the moral movement in human history.

The sinlessness of Jesus has a double interest; first, for himself and, secondly, for humanity. There are two explanations of Jesus' freedom from sin. One, that he was sinless by his divine nature; being divine it was impossible that he should sin. The other, that his sinlessness was a moral achievement, won in real battle, the same battle between the spirit and the flesh which is the substance of every man's moral discipline.

We ought to be able to see the worthlessness of a ready made virtue; how not to sin because

he could not, would be of no credit to Jesus or any one. To suppose it true of Jesus that it was impossible for him to sin would theatricalize all his work. His temptation in the wilderness would be merely a scene behind the footlights; his agony in the garden a blasphemous farce; his suffering on the cross a tragedy on the stage instead of in real life; his whole life an artificial, not a real moral experience.

But there can be no need to defend Jesus from the charge of moral unreality. The scriptures are too plain in their teaching on this point to leave any doubt in a candid mind. "He was tempted in all points like as we are." "He was made perfect through suffering." "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." His life was throughout an intense struggle with temptation, his way to victory lay through moral perils and risks, he was not guaranteed victory any more than we are; it had to be won; and if we will think about it candidly and sanely we shall come to feel that it could

not have been otherwise without the loss by Jesus of his greatest glory. He is the captain of our salvation because he was made perfect through suffering.

What has been said already prepares us for reading the life of Jesus as a chapter in the life of humanity. His moral experience has organic relations to our own. He is a part of the humanity which was affected by the original sin, a part of the humanity which has been universally involved in the struggle between the two laws of Paul, the law of the spirit of life and the law of the members. We must read the explanation of the sinlessness of Jesus in terms of the universal experience of humanity.

The sinlessness of Jesus is related to the original sin as complete success is related to failure in moral enterprise. It is related to the sinfulness of the race as success is related to mixed degrees of failure and success. It is related to the moral condition consequent upon the remission of sins as flawless moral perfection is related to mended moral character, as a maintained and unimpaired sinlessness is related to a sinlessness grafted on a past experience of moral evil. That Jesus succeeded where the rest

of humanity have failed does not change the fact that these elements of the struggle were the same in his case and theirs; first, the discovery through divine revelation of the claims of the law of the spirit of life; second, the new emphasis with which the law of the flesh asserts itself when it meets the opposition of the law of the spirit (Christ's temptation, after his baptism and the descent of the Spirit, is an exact psychological parallel of Adam's temptation which came after a new sense of moral responsibility); third, the alliance between the Spirit of God and the spiritual forces of man's higher nature: the spirit of life which has brought the man into the struggle with the powers that people his lower nature, guiding and inspiring him in that struggle if he will; fourth, the direction of the life to its moral destiny in freedom from sin or in death through sin, according as the man lives by the law of the spirit of life or by the law of the lower nature. In this struggle Jesus shared the experience of every man, except that He alone lived out so perfectly the law of the spirit of life that the law of the members, the law of the lower nature, won never a single victory in the life-long warfare.

He was tempted in all points as we are, only without sin.

An essential element in the moral value to other men of this unbroken victory is that it was won by the same means which are within every man's reach in his own struggle. The Spirit of God, i. e., God Himself, is the ready and mighty ally of every man seeking His help in the battle of life. God was as ready and mighty in Adam's need of Him as He was in Jesus'. God has been as ready and mighty in every man's need of him as He was in Jesus'. But the difficulty has been that the Spirit of God did not find in Adam, has not found in men, a fulcrum, in faith, for his work. Adam did not furnish his contribution to the result only God and he together could accomplish, in confidence in God and coöperation with him. He did not believe God pointing out the right way and indicating the consequence of going the wrong way. Only through belief in God, through taking God's view of the matter and acting accordingly could he avail himself of God's help. And Adam's trouble has been the trouble of every man since who has sinned and suffered through sinning. God's Spirit has been ready, but the man has not. Man has not fur-

nished the fulcrum of belief in God's way for God's lever of helpfulness in making things go that way. Faith in God, confidence in His way—the manward side of the partnership between God and man—has been the lacking thing.

In contrast with all this the secret of Jesus' success where others have failed was his faith. He believed God against everything which has weakened other men's belief in God. The essential difference between Adam and Jesus is in Adam's want of faith and Jesus' faith; Adam's lack of confidence in God's word and Jesus' clear conviction of the truth of what God said. If we may suppose Jesus in Adam's place He would have done what Adam did not do, what He himself always did do; He would have said "Get thee behind me, Satan." And that would have been in germ the difference between a moral world taking its color from Adam and one taking its color from Jesus. Jesus would have said "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Faith in every word of God—that was the secret of Jesus' ability to always deny the insinuations of evil and defeat its assaults upon the citadel of His moral perfection. This faith of His was God's

Spirit's opportunity, as every man's faith is God's Spirit's opportunity. It is because our faith is so imperfect that the Spirit of God does so little that is noteworthy in and through us. We do not give Him the opportunity. And it is because we are habitually familiar with the results of little faith only that we can not understand how faith, Jesus' faith, can be an adequate explanation of what the Spirit of God did in and through Him. If we appreciated the possibilities of faith in a child of God, how absolute it may be, what complete confidence in the truth and reliability of God, we should come into immensely larger conceptions of the possibilities of achievement by the Spirit of God through faith, and should be at no loss to understand how such a faith as that of Jesus is a sufficient explanation of what God was able to do through Him in the way of a life free from sin.

But how does this sinlessness of Jesus through His faith concern humanity? How is it related to our remission of sins, our salvation?

It would seem plain that if all men could have resisted temptation as Jesus did or could have endured as He did the test put upon man's strength by the law of the spirit, humanity would

have had a normal moral history, without sin. But that is only a sad "might have been." The question is how, having sinned, are we to be saved? The gospel answer to this question is one with which we are all familiar. We are saved by the grace of God through faith. And that is precisely the answer we should expect if, as we saw in the last chapter, God has not changed His method of realizing his purpose in the moral perfection of His universe. The method of salvation by faith is identical with the method of perfection by faith, missed by Adam, used by Jesus, which was the plan on which God started out with His creation, the living out by faith the law of the spirit. Jesus maintained His moral nature in a normal condition by living by faith according to the law of the spirit; we are to attain the normal, the sinless, condition of our moral nature by the same simple means. The moral state into which we come by the remission of our sins is the moral state in which Jesus continued from the first by not sinning; and the condition of our gaining and continuing in that moral state is precisely what it was in Jesus, His faith.

It is quite remarkable how the interpreters of the New Testament have missed the meaning of many passages which affirm this relation of the faith of Jesus to our salvation with great emphasis and clearness. It is to be accounted for only by the preoccupation of the mind by theories which shut out impressions contrary to them, however plain the words of different import may be. In this case the theory which shuts the truth out of the mind is that which describes the work of Christ in the redemption of men under the form of a propitiation of divine anger at sin; a sacrifice to the divine justice furnishing a basis for the pardon of the sinner.

It is not to be lightly denied that the New Testament, in some of its teachings, seems to give warrant to this dogma of Christ's winning God's favor for sinners by a sacrifice of Himself which propitiates divine justice. But there is not a passage which suggests this meaning to the reader who sees it from the point of view of medieval theology, which does not suggest a different meaning to the reader who sees it from Christ's point of view of God's loving fatherhood. The man who holds the Ptolemaic theory of the universe naturally gives an explanation of the

facts of observation different from that given by the man who holds the Copernican theory. So Paul's language may have one meaning for the man who thinks of God in the character of a heathen Jupiter or a Roman Caesar and another for the man who thinks of Him after the manner of Jesus.

Take, for instance, Romans 3:25, 26, where we have two of the strongest of the words which are said to compel our belief in the propitiation of God by Christ's death. Paul says (revised version): "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God set forth, a propitiation, through faith, by his blood." The word translated "redemption" sometimes means in secular Greek, "a release effected by ransom," as when a bandit releases a captive for a ransom. In its use in the Greek religion this sense of the word was strictly appropriate, for their gods were moved by the passions of men, and when angry, like men required such things as ransoms, sacrifices, before they would release men from the consequences of their anger. But that Paul is using this word in a sense appropriate to the religion he was teaching and to the God whom he honored is

shown by what he goes on to say of propitiation. The word translated "propitiation" is, literally, a means of appeasing. That is, that is the sense which would belong to the word if it were kept to its root meaning. And as applied to the gods of heathenism the meaning is well enough. They were a sort of god that demanded to be appeased. They would show no favor to worshippers until they were appeased. But quite contrary to the spirit of the word as it might have been used of heathen gods, Paul here says that God put Jesus forward as a propitiation! If Jesus is a propitiation of God, in the Greek religion sense of propitiation, how strange that God supplies the propitiation. "I demand to be appeased. Here, I give you Jesus; if you will sacrifice him to me I will be appeased!" If God puts Jesus forward as a propitiation, it must be propitiation in some sense consistent with God's love, for God's love is plainly in action before the propitiation is. This is not propitiation in the Greek-religion sense. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." God loved the world as much before as after He put Jesus forward as a propitiation; was as ready to remit sins before

as after Jesus died, upon repentance and obedience to the law of the spirit of life.

When we look closely at the word which Paul uses here we see what he means by it. This word is used in only one other place in the New Testament, Hebrews 9:5, where it is translated "mercy seat." In this instance the translators have been more faithful to the spirit of the word, for it is the word which in the Greek version of the Old Testament, which was the common version of Paul's time, was always used to designate the cover of the ark in the Holy of Holies in the ancient Tabernacle, the "mercy seat" as it was called, where God met the high priest of the Jewish people once a year and blessed the people through him. Taking in connection with this the fact that the word is nowhere found in classic Greek literature, we can not fail to see what meaning Paul intended by the word. He gave it the usual meaning in the religious language of his people, the only meaning he was accustomed to; and that meaning was "mercy seat." What he says here is that God put Jesus forward as a "mercy seat," as a manifestation and medium of mercy from God to man, not a mercy Jesus awakened in the heart of God but the

mercy which, always from eternity in the heart of God, was the reason why Jesus was put forward; just as the old mercy seat was a place where God showed his mercy to his people. The work of Christ is not to move the heart of God to love, but to move the hearts of men by the love of God to love as God already loves, to gain entrance into their lives that he may live again his life of divine love.

It would be easy to enlarge upon this and cite many words and urge many considerations showing the same ground for belief that much of our theology has fatally misunderstood the New Testament in deducing from it the doctrine of an expiatory sacrifice offered to God by Jesus as a ground of pardon. But it is better that I call your attention to that large class of passages of which this dogma of Christ's expiatory sacrifice has quite hidden the meaning. They are the passages which speak of the agency of the "faith of Jesus" in our salvation.

Take Galatians 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ." This significant utterance of

Paul theologians have so far misunderstood as to substitute "faith in Jesus" for the "faith of Jesus." They have made the belief about Jesus, belief upon Jesus, belief in Jesus, which is in the main, at least, an intellectual act, the ground of that right relation to God which is called justification, although Paul says distinctly that it is the faith of Jesus which brings about this right relation. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," but conventional religious teaching makes him say "by faith in the Son of God." In Philippians 3:9 Paul speaks of having a righteousness which is through the "faith of Jesus." And the justification which is through the faith of Jesus according to the text from Galatians is the same thing as the righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus according to the text from Philippians, for the Greek word is the same in both instances.

The same form of words occurs in the original, in Romans 3:26, but in this instance the translators have taken the liberty to interpret the language of Paul under cover of translating it, and have made him say in our English version that God is the "justifier of him who believes in

Jesus." What Paul did say, however, was "him who is of the faith of Jesus." The same form of words occurs again in Romans 4:16, where Paul has occasion to speak of men who are "of the faith of Abraham." That can mean nothing else than men who have Abraham's faith, and because the translators were under no temptation to make it mean anything else they rendered it as Paul wrote it. But in 3:26 where Paul speaks of the faith of Jesus the translators were under the temptation supplied by their preconceived theory of the relation of faith in Jesus to justification and so construed Paul's plain words to serve the purpose of their dogma. Instead of letting him say "him who has the faith of Jesus," they make him say "him who believes in Jesus." It would be invidious to say that this was conscious perversion; rather it was the effect of the complete preoccupation of their minds by another point of view.

What does this verse mean then? Remembering that Paul uses the same word for "right" and "just," and the same word for righteousness and justification, we shall take the plainest and shortest route to his meaning when we understand him to say that God rectifies the

man, makes the man right or righteous, who has the faith of Jesus, Jesus' faith. This is not simply rectification of legal relations, "justification," but rectification of life and character. And to go on to a full understanding of Paul's meaning we should take into account his wonderful theory of Christ living in the Christian. Paul often says in one form and another what he says in Galatians 2:20—"Christ lives in me." He says God revealed Christ in him i. e. in Paul. Christ in men is their hope of glory. "My little children," he says, "of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is life because of righteousness." He is fond of speaking of the "mind of Christ" as being in us.

This favorite phrase of Paul, the faith of Jesus, this favorite idea of Paul, the life of Jesus in the Christian, have been overlooked by eyes which could see nothing in them equal to the demands of the preconceived theory of an expiatory propitiation for a sacrifice to God which should be the ground of pardon. Paul's teaching, however, suggests a very different idea of the way in which our salvation is wrought out by Christ.

Really the scene of the redemption, of the atonement, is not the cross on Calvary, but the cross in the life of the Christian. On the cross of Calvary Jesus achieved His own perfect obedience to the law of the Spirit. There He demonstrated the perfectness of His own faith. But the scene of the obedience of Jesus unto death, the scene of His faith, must be transferred to the life of each disciple if his obedience, his faith, is to be effectual in the redemption of that disciple. The life of Christ lived in the disciple is indispensable to the salvation of the disciple. And when we get into Paul's thought about this, see into the deep meaning of rectification of the life of men by the faith of Jesus, we shall find ourselves simply back once more on the ground of God's original purpose for His creation. The faith of Jesus, in Him and in every man is the one only, eternal and universal, means to the salvation of men. In Jesus Himself it kept Him faithful unto death. The faith of Jesus would have kept the first man sinless if he had had it. The faith of Jesus will work to the same result which it wrought out in Jesus in any man who will take Christ into his life and let Him live His life of faith there. What the world wants most is

not faith in something Jesus did, or faith in Him that He did what he did, but His faith by which He did what he did, that by it men may do the same things in their degree.

It is possible to misunderstand this truth precisely as the world has so long misunderstood the relation of Christ's death to our salvation. Paul says we are saved by His life, we are justified by His faith, we are sanctified by His spirit; but, blinded by our preoccupation of mind, we give His life, His faith, His spirit, the wrong location. We say we are saved, we are justified, we are sanctified by His life, His faith, His spirit, and the idea of substitution creeps in under the emphasis we put upon *His* life, *His* faith, *His* spirit; but the true location of His life, His faith, His spirit, is in us, and in Him for us only as he is in us. Not because He had His faith, His spirit, are we saved, any more than because He died, unless His faith, His spirit, are in us. Even as to His death Paul says—in the same profound way—we must die with Him in order for His death to avail for us. The thing needing to be done is to learn that there is no substitution in Christ's work for us. What He does for us is what He does in us; His faith,

in Him, is no substitute for His faith, in us; His spirit, in Him, is no substitute for His spirit in us; His death, on the cross, is no substitute for our death, His death availing for us only when we die with Him, he in us living unto righteousness and dying unto sin continually.

The faith of Jesus! Do we rise to an understanding of these words? Their divine wealth of meaning? The faith which Jesus proved to have, a belief, trust, confidence in God, which rises to the level where it becomes joy, delight, in doing the will of God, however hard; the faith which accepts the authority of the law of the spirit of life and is able to live it out, unhindered by the drag upon it of the lower nature; this faith of Jesus was the human aspect of the power to which God entrusted his moral creation at the first for safe and successful evolution. The divine side of the power was God's own Spirit, furnishing the law of life and ready and mighty to work through men's faith. The first man had not this faith, the only thing that could save him from failure. O the pity of it! Nor did those who followed have it. Still the power of it grew in human life, until the divine ideal of a

power of not sinning, a salvation through faith, was finally realized in Jesus. And what is that

“One far off divine event

To which the whole creation moves,”

of which the poet sings, but the final perfection of humanity in the type of Jesus, the bringing all things to that fulfillment in Christ of which Paul speaks so strikingly in his letter to the Ephesians? And what is this again but the realization of the original divine purpose in creation, wrought out at last in a divinized humanity by the same means so effective in the Divine Christ himself, his faith in God enabling him to live the life of the Spirit? This is the justification by the faith of Jesus of which Paul speaks, the righteousness which that faith wrought in him and will work in every man who will live by it. And in God's own good time that righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus, wrought out in Jesus and in all other men by one and the self same means, shall characterize the completed creation, the finished evolution.

Mark 11:10—"Blessed be the Kingdom that Cometh."

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

THE SOCIALITY OF REDEMPTION.

THE MORAL discipline of humanity which began with the original sin we have now traced to its end in sinlessness, the sinlessness of Jesus, the type of character in which redeemed humanity is to be finally organized. This is to be the result of the coöperation of divine grace and human faith; God giving man the Spirit of life and man learning to live out the law of the Spirit of life by the faith of Jesus, until the sinlessness of Jesus, as realized in Him by faith, shall be realized also in humanity by the same means.

But the soul of man moved by the divine Spirit within it asks for something more than mere sinlessness. Humanity was sinless in Adam, but that sinlessness was no protection against the entrance of evil into human experience. If humanity were to become sinless in Christ, with the difference implied in Christ's power of not sinning through faith, it might still be like a spiritual house empty, swept and gar-

nished, unspeakably delightful for an instant after the experience of possession by the devils of sin, but unbearable as a permanent home for a soul filled with the active energies of the Spirit of God.

In the moral history of man ending in sinlessness we shall seem to be moving in a circle and coming out where we began, at simple innocence, unless we see the sinlessness of Jesus always in its relation to the faith which achieved it. Sinlessness by itself is a negative virtue. It may mean no more than the absence of sin. It was all that in the case of the first man. But in Christ it is an achievement of faith, by struggle and discipline of the severest kind, a positive and impregnable excellence. Faith is the positive element in the sinlessness of Jesus, its greater secret, its diviner part.

But here once more there is danger of missing the divine meaning of the truth. Sinlessness by faith? But what is faith? What is that which, in God and Jesus and humanity, Paul identifies under this name? The faith of God, the faith of Jesus—in what sense can God have faith?

Faith is sometimes belief. But belief does not fit the idea of faith when we think of God's faith.

Faith has associations in thought other than with belief, associations with faithfulness. Belief represents the intellectual relations of faith, faithfulness its higher, practical, vital relations. The faith of God belongs with faithfulness. And it is the faith which classifies with faithfulness, which, as Paul says, "works by love." Love is the motive power of such a faith. When we speak of the sinlessness of Jesus achieved by faith we mean a faith which works by love. The sinlessness of Jesus is sinlessness organized in love, that love which is the fulfilling of the law. It was because His faith worked by love that He was able to obey so perfectly the law of the Spirit of life. Is not God's own sinlessness, what we call His holiness, organized in the same way? In faith, or faithfulness, working by love?

Let us venture the eyes of our minds a moment in gazing into the dazzling glory of the divine character, to see if there is anything more significant than His holiness, by itself, can be. Suppose it possible to conceive of God as alone. Not alone in His universe, for as yet there is no universe but God. If there were He would not be alone. He is the universe, God alone. It is due to the structure of our very capacities for

thought and feeling that such a conception of God strikes our heart with a chill. Abstract, cold, empty, such a vision of God freezes us. Why? Such a God might be absolutely sinless—the white purity of the vision might be perfect, all the requirements of mere holiness might be met in him—but something vital would be lacking; He would be a God without heart. Otherwise He could not live alone.

Hawthorne in his "Christian Banquet," sketches the character of a man without a heart. The banquet was given annually for the ten most miserable men that could be found. Most miserable for many years among them all was Gervayse Hastings. You might conceive him carved out of marble, he was so calm and cold. Idiots were wont to fix their melancholy stare upon his face, touch him with their hands and draw back muttering "cold, cold, cold." "His children, when he extended his arms to them, came coldly to his knees but never climbed them of their own accord. His wife wept secretly and almost adjudged herself a criminal because she shivered in the chill of his bosom. . . . Age stole onward and benumbed him more and more. As the hoar frost began to gather on him his

wife went to her grave and was doubtless warmer there. . . . And old Gervayse Hastings, unscathed by grief, but needing no companionship, continued his steady walk through life, and still every Christmas day attended the dismal banquet." A God without a heart would be infinitely sadder than this.

Browning, in his "Christmas Eve" says:

In youth I looked to those very skies,
 And probing their immensities
 I found God there, His visible power,
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of the power, an equal evidence
 That His love, there too, was the nobler power.
 For the loving worm within his clod
 Were diviner than a loveless God.

To speak of God thus only shows the poverty of our language, but the impression is independent of language.

The beginning of the story of the universe, in the first chapter of Genesis, gives us as graphic a picture of the reality as the mind is capable of receiving. "In the beginning—God . . . and the universe was vastness and emptiness. And darkness"—the blackness of nothingness—"was everywhere in the profound." But the seer who pictures the scene for us hastens to relieve

the mind of the horror of the situation. Already God is at work. Really the vision of the seer does not reach back to a point beyond the divine activity in creating. "The Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters." All that he saw, after the first frightful instant of revelation of blackness of nothingness, was like a mass of waters—a limitless ocean of unorganized matter—but over this the infinite mother-love, God, was already brooding.

If, trying no longer to hold our thoughts to so strained a conception of God as that of His aloneness, we give them their accustomed freedom in the knowledge of God as Jesus believed in Him—the infinite Father in the midst of His family—we shall feel at once that this revelation of God as brooding love gives us a fundamental quality in God without which we cannot conceive of God at all. What was lacking in God, thought of in His aloneness, was love. With no one to love, the God of Jesus would be unthinkable. From the beginning God must have been the infinite fountain of love. Before creation God's divineness would be most manifest in His loving purpose to create, in His loving anticipation of the perfect world He had in view.

He could not be God alone; prophetically or actually He must have objects of love; from the beginning the yearning of the divine nature was that of love; the meaning of divine activity was loving for the sake of life. Holiness without this in God would be no satisfaction to the heart of man taught of Christ.

And Jesus—how bootless after all his sinlessness appears except as we see in it the victory of faith, faith in God as love, faith working in Jesus by love; a faith which constructed His life on the divine lines of love and engaged Him in the service of the divine love with every power of His being. That Christ was love was the same greater secret of His divineness that God's love is in God. Love is the key-attribute in Jesus as in God.

To divinize humanity, then, to save men through the faith of Jesus, to organize in them the character of Jesus—what does it mean but that their faith is to be raised to the Jesus-power by the same love by which Jesus' faith worked? And if our deepest instincts demand love in God as the soul of his holiness, if in Christ love is the secret of His sinlessness, then in divinized, Christ-like men, the man saved by Christ, whose

spirit is organized in the spirit of Jesus, may we not hope to see as the key-element in his salvation the same divine love which qualifies Christ in His lordship in the creation of God? Against this back ground of God's love-character and love-purpose, of Christ's character and purpose in redemption, what sort of a redeemed man shall we put? Will a merely happy man do? Or even a merely sinless man? Is salvation, whose other name is happiness, or salvation, whose equivalent is holiness, a salvation which satisfies the mind as a result of the faith of Jesus working in the human soul? Shall not the saved man, saved by the faith of Jesus, be like Jesus in his power of loving as well as in his power of not sinning? Shall not the faith of Jesus in us, working by love, be directed towards the realization through us of God's love's purpose in a redeemed world? Shall not Christ's love for men surge in our lives as it did in His? As it has surged in God's life from eternity?

As selfishness and Christlikeness are a contradiction in terms, are not selfishness and salvation also? To be saved, is it not to come into Christlikeness, which is love, to have the same power of self-consecration through love, which was the

divinest trait of Christ's character? Is not the redemption of the individual soul reached through the engagement of that soul in Christ's work of redeeming others? Is it in personal sinlessness only or not rather in the life of ministry to the lives of others that the soul comes most vitally in touch with Christ and God?

In other words, the end sought in redemption, the true goal of the moral evolution, is divinized society. It is the organization of human relations in the spirit of Christ, the divinizing of the life forces which make society. God aims to have every man think of and act towards every other man as Christ thinks of and acts towards every man. With love as the key to the divine character, the redeemed—that is the divinized human character—is to be finally keyed to service through love. The love of Christ in His disciple's heart requires society to give it expression, just as at first there was no opportunity for the love of God without creation. Good men can no more find the end of their living in self than could Christ or God.

So we speak of the sociality of redemption. The redeemed man is ex-officio a factor in the redemption of society. Perhaps we can see light

here from Christ's teaching that the forgiveness of our sins by our Heavenly Father depends upon our forgiving the sins of others against us. The forgiven debtor, in the parable, was thrown back into prison when he took his own debtor by the throat. If the forgiveness of sins is really the getting rid of sin, the act of forgiving our fellowmen and the experience of being forgiven by God are one and the same thing. God's love has its expression in us in our love for others. We are redeemed when our lives are organized in the redemptive love of God, and we turn with God towards the redemption of other men. We become fully the objects of God's love only in becoming His agents in the redemption of society.

This Christ-society, this divine humanity, Christ delights in calling the kingdom of God. Long before Christ's day there were seers who by exceptional spiritual insight understood something of the imperfect and artificial character of human kingdoms. They were idealists, poets, dreamers, whose words seemed vague or foolish to the practical men of their times. They sang of the king who was coming in such terms that to those who listened he seemed not so

much a king as a servant. "Behold my servant whom I uphold; my chosen in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break and a dimly burning wick shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth." (Isa. 42:1-4.) "His visage was so marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men." (Isa. 52:14.) "He hath no form nor comeliness and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isa. 53:2-4.)

It was next to impossible to make phrases like these serve as description of a king for the multitude of the Jewish people. And yet the impression of real kingliness which they made upon the minds and hearts of the spiritually sensitive was deep and strong and abiding. Prophets were

continually appearing to affirm it. Sometimes with just enough admixture of royal colors in the sombre picture to fascinate the attention of the unspiritual crowd they sang, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass." (Zech. 9:9.) Even John the Baptist, when he came and began to preach the kingdom of God, did not wholly understand until after he had seen Jesus the meaning of his message. His own heart leaned towards the fulfillment of the more kingly sort of prophecies. He did not wholly grasp the prediction about the servant-king. But Jesus brought to His work of preaching the kingdom of God which was at hand a full appreciation of the nature of the kingdom; that it was to be a kingdom in which he who could serve best should reign most; a kingdom whose king was not to be ministered unto, but to minister; a king whose sceptre was love, whose royalty was humility.

Was this kingdom of which Jesus the lowly, the suffering servant of His fellowmen was the fitting sovereign, a new type of kingdom in God's universe? No. This Christ-society, this

society of men like-minded with Jesus, related to their fellow men by love, not by selfishness, energized throughout by the redemptive impulse, organized for redemption, is the eternal form of the divine government. As the redeemed man, the Christian, the Christ-man is the eternal type of manhood, the man creation started out to produce, so the Christ-society, the whole of humanity organized in Christliness, was the divine idea from the beginning. Such a human society is only the kingdom of God extended to earth; the reign of God among men is only the fashion of the divine government extended to human relations.

We can not emphasize too strongly the truth that God's government has not changed from the beginning. God has always been determined in His relations to man by love; God has always been ministering, not ministered unto; God has never, any more than in Christ, selfishly sought His own glory, but always, as in Christ, has been moved by the impulse towards the cross for man's sake. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

It ought not to bewilder us that men have not always thought thus about God. Nothing is

plainer than that Christ revealed something about God which men, even the best men, did not know before. With knowledge of God as Christ revealed Him the habit of talking about God which prevailed before Christ ought to cease. What if godly men before Christ did believe such things about God? That can not affect our duty to deny what Christ showed to be false. So all conceptions of the divine government constructed on the lines underlying human governments in the imperfect conditions of human society, conceptions emphasizing God's concern for His own glory, and His arbitrary exercise of power, His jealous, unloving conduct, must be denied in the interest of the eternal truth about God which Christ taught. And we must understand that everything which God has ever done in the government of His kingdom of human life has had the motive and the spirit which Christ carried to the cross.

The spiritually keen-eyed seers of the old dispensation, who saw the better ideal of kingliness in contrast with the hard, selfish, splendid royalty of the world's kings, did not simply see what was to develop in course of time with the growth of gentler manners, a higher type of life, but they

saw what was eternally true in God Himself. He was from the beginning a servant-king. He has from the beginning reigned in the spirit of Christ. If He has not seemed to it has been because men have not understood him. God, in Christ, corrected the misunderstandings of the ages.

So, brethren, thinking of a divinized human society as the real goal of the creative purpose, we are simply thinking of the eternal kingdom of God, the kingdom whose sceptre is love, extended into human life. Like king, like people. We are not simply to be ruled in love, but the love which is the essential principle of the divine relation to us is offered us as the essential principle also of our relations to our fellow men. We are ruled of God when His life lives in us, and His life is love. The world of man is in obedience to God when the relations of man to man are determined by the law of God's relations to man, which is love

The blessed kingdom of God which the ancient seer discovered in the distance, which the jubilant crowd hailing Jesus with hosannas on Palm Sunday believed to be immediately coming, is a kingdom, as Jesus said, within men. Its

strength is in divine forces reorganizing the soul character of men. Its laws are the principles of the divine character continued in men. The constitution of the kingdom is love as God is love.

We readily admit the essentiality of love in the divine character. God is love: that we understand, that is vital. But how often we appear to be moved to this assertion not by any clear preception of its real significance, but by our appreciation of how much depends for us upon the love of God. We demand love in God because we preceive that divine character would be undivine any otherwise determined, because we preceive that any moral character is undivine constructed on any other basis than love, but how much too because we believe that if God were not love the world, and we, would be robbed of the benefits of His love. God must be love for our sake, for the sake of our eternal welfare. But O, is it not possible for us to see how it has been under cover of such a selfish theory of God's relations to our redemption that all the terrible crimes against the love of God in the history of Christianity have been made possible? Because men have thought of themselves as objects of His love more than as its agents, as vats receiv-

ing His love more than as fountains pouring it out, as absorbing it more than radiating it, it has been possible for them to shut their eyes to the folly, the absurdity, the criminality, of selfishness in the Christian life. Men have thought themselves Christians by mysterious decrees or operations of grace guaranteeing them admission into the fold and ark of safety, who have never dreamed that to be a Christian means to be a lover of men in Christ's fashion, and have found no prohibition in the Christian life—O, strange blindness! of those cruel, grinding inhumanities, which mark so widely the practical relations of man to man. A saved man and not a Christly lover of men! A Christian and an oppressor of his fellow men! A Christian and trying to climb to fortune over the misfortunes of his fellow men! A Christian and seeking success in any of the ways open to the shrewd and unscrupulous man to-day which involve the suffering of his fellowmen! A saved man, saved by God's love, by Christ's life, and not actuated in his life as Christ was actuated in His life by God's love! We are dealing in contradictions of terms. That is salvation which is wrought out for man in the divinizing of his life and character, and there is

no divinizing of life possible which leaves it un-Christlike, unloving

Redemption, then, cannot be an individual matter only and be complete. It cannot be merely the righting of relations between God and man. It must be a righting of relations between man and man also. It does not, it cannot, end in God's love's rescuing man from the consequences of sin or even from sin. Redemption is social. The redeemed man, by virtue of being such a man, is in relations to his fellow men, the same relations in which Christ is to him. Love to God answering the love of God is not enough. "If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" asks the apostle. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."

The real goal of the moral evolution of man, then, is in the establishment in humanity of a kingdom of God in which the power of not sinning shall be the victory of the faith of Jesus in man's relation to man, a victory won by that love which is the fulfilling of the whole law of God.

The law of the Spirit of Life is love. This is the energy of God's holiness, of Christ's sinlessness. Love is the will of God, which it was Christ's delight to do. To the degree that men learn to delight in the law of love, learn to seek the highest good in the most perfect fellowship with Jesus in doing the loving will of God, Christ has come in His kingdom; to that degree have the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.

The seers, prophets, poets, of modern times are as insistent on the certainty of the coming of this social redemption, this kingdom of a God of love, as the ancient Hebrew singer who foretold that the earth should "be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"; of a glad time when "they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain." It is this spirit that sings in Tennyson, when he cries—

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
And sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand years of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



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